

PREFACE

IN the following chapters, my object has been to tell the story of the Life and Times of Constantino the Great. Whether he deserves the epithet my readers will judge for themselves; certainly his place in the select list of the immortals is not among the highest. But whether he himself was "great" or not, under his auspices one of the most momentous changes in the history of the world was accomplished, and it is the first conversion of a Roman Emperor to Christianity, with all that such conversion entailed, which makes his period so important and so well worth studying.

I have tried to write with impartiality—a virtue which one admires the more after a close reading of original authorities who, practically without exception, were bitter and malevolent partisans. The truth, therefore, is not always easily recognised, nor has recognition been made the easier by the polemical writers of succeeding centuries who have dealt with that side of Constantine's career which belongs more particularly to ecclesiastical history. In narrating the course of the Arian Controversy and the proceedings of the Council of Nicaea I have been content to record facts—as I have seen them—and